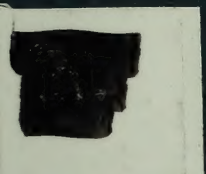

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
DURHAM, N. C.

Sigillum Universitatis Dukensis
Eruditio et Religio

Rec'd 1931
Library Fee
Fund

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Duke University Libraries

https://archive.org/details/womenofpassion01craf

The Women of
the Passion

The Women of the Passion

BEING A SERIES OF HOLY WEEK ADDRESSES

BY THE REV.

T. W. Crafer, B.D.

Vicar of All Saints', Cambridge; Chaplain and Lecturer of Downing College

Second Impression

Church

London: Skeffington & Son

34, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.

Publishers to His Majesty the King

Sch.R.
232.96
C885W

Dedication

TO MY WIFE

213963

Preface.

THESE addresses on "The Women of the Passion" were delivered on the evenings of Holy Week, 1910. It was suggested to me afterwards that there were some who would like them reproduced in permanent form. Therefore, in thus writing them out from my notes, my first thought has been of my own dear flock at All Saints', Cambridge. But, feeble as the words may be, their theme is a great one, and I do not know of its having been dealt with in this form elsewhere. I venture to hope therefore that these poor thoughts, expressing as they do my own meditations during the Holy Week, may prove not wholly without help and value to a wider circle of the faithful.

There may be some, who are prevented from making a full use of the services of that season, who may welcome some new basis of their private meditations day by day during the week. And, though the addresses were not given exclusively to women, they should not be without a

213963

message to women at any time in the Church's year.

And again, my own custom of giving a reading at one of the services each day of Holy Week, has shown me that there is still a need of suitable manuals for such public use. It is possible that some of my brethren may think my subject a worthy one, and if so, they will find that I have provided for the occasional need of a *short* reading, by arranging two headings in each address. Good Friday and Easter Eve have only one address provided between them, the probability being that on the former day we prefer that all thoughts should be centred only in "Christ, and Him crucified." And it was impossible for the course to be complete without an address for Easter as its sequel.

The tender and beautiful relation of women to our Blessed Lord at the time of His Passion and Resurrection perhaps can still only be realised by a woman. But I humbly pray that even these words of mine may be of some use to my sisters, as they take their place at the foot of the Cross, or seek to hold their risen Master by the feet and worship Him.

Walberswick, S. Bartholomew, 1910.

Contents.

PAGE

I. THE BLESSED VIRGIN - - 1
An Address for the Monday in Holy Week.

II. MARY OF BETHANY - - 11
An Address for the Tuesday in Holy Week.

III. THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM - 23
An Address for the Wednesday in Holy Week.

IV. PILATE'S WIFE - - - 35
An Address for the Thursday in Holy Week.

V. MARY MAGDALENE AND HER COMPANIONS AFTER THE ENTOMBMENT 47
An Address for Good Friday Evening or Easter Eve.

VI. MARY MAGDALENE AND HER COMPANIONS AFTER THE RESURRECTION 59
An Address for Easter Day.

I.

ADDRESS FOR THE MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The Blessed Virgin

The Women of the Passion.

I.

ADDRESS FOR THE MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

The Blessed Virgin.

As it is true that we never find a woman hostile to our Lord or opposing Him all through His earthly life, so does this fact become the more wonderful and suggestive when we reach that climax of *men's* growing hatred and opposition which we see in Holy Week. There can be no doubt that a study of their sisters example at the great crisis of the world's redemption must be helpful to women still, nor shall we who are men feel that there is anything unmanly in learning our lesson from these whom I have called "The Women of the Passion." Holy

Week brings at once before our eyes those of whom we know but little during the days of the ministry, the little band of women who came with their beloved Lord from Galilee. Foremost among them is the Blessed Virgin herself, full of tender love, tortured with increasing solicitude, suffering as the Mater Dolorosa of the Passion, and yet the object of her Divine Son's care upon the Cross itself.

We see Mary of Bethany, the friend of earlier days, still welcoming Him in her village home, making the sacrifice of love, pouring the precious unguent upon His head, and winning from Him that blessed commendation, "She hath wrought a good work on Me." And we see the band of ministering women who came with Him from Galilee, ministering still, though it be in the helplessness of a last tribute of devotion. We see too yet another band of women, the daughters of Jerusalem, following afar off on the road to Calvary, softening its cruelty by the tribute of their tears.

And we will remember another woman after them, one who is generally forgotten, and yet who deserves a thought on Good

Friday, for hers was the one voice that was raised on His behalf during those trial scenes of mockery. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." The words of Pilate's wife are not without their lesson for us.

And as the Passion ends, and the Resurrection dawns, it is Mary Magdalene, who had kept her sad vigil at the tomb, who is the first to speak with her Risen Master. When we have studied the conduct of the "Women of the Passion," it is small wonder that to them first should come the new wonder and joy of Easter Day.

But it is of the Virgin that we will think first, and there are two thoughts I want to leave with you.

1. There has been a long silence about her previously to the Passion. She was there at the wedding-feast, full of confidence in the work of her Divine Son. Even the mother of a bad son believes in him when the rest of the world does not. How much more in a Son Who was perfect goodness? We see something of *any* mother's pardonable pride in her words to the servants,

"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." And then in after time, we are told, His relations came to seize Him, for they said, "He is beside Himself." They saw that His actions were leading to difficulty and danger, and so they tried to stop Him before it was too late. This will help us to understand why, when men told Him, "Thy mother and Thy brethren are without, desiring to see Thee," His answer seemed scarcely a kindly one. What part the Blessed Virgin played we do not know, but we can imagine her motherly fears were aroused. His life and work were not shaping themselves as she expected, as she had meant them to, and she is perplexed.

And now that the Passion has come, how that perplexity has deepened! Things are not working out as she had pictured, and the contrast of what might have been wrings her heart with agony. Good Friday comes; the brave devoted mother stands close by: it shall be mother and Son to the very end—that is her last sad determination, her final consolation. No! He has willed it otherwise. She is given to S. John. "Woman, behold thy

Son." And to him, "Behold thy mother." It was in tender thought He did it, for the end was too bitter for her to see. There are some scenes (I always think a graveside is one) which a woman's tenderness had best be spared. And we picture S. John leading her away to his own home, reluctant, her last sad luxury of ministering sorrow denied her, and yet (I doubt not) with that first maiden cry still upon the mother's lips, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me even as Thou wilt."

Brethren, with us too, how differently things shape themselves from what *we* have expected, and we have planned. Castles that we built in the air in our youth have crumbled into dust. Is it that we have not the place in the world ourselves that we have arranged for and striven after? Or is it that the life of those we love has not worked out along *our* lines? They have taken their own path, the path of sacrifice perhaps, but *we* had prepared for them a path of roses. Or is it our own spiritual life that is so different from what we planned? We thought long ago to mount on angels'

wings, and go from strength to strength in the joy and brightness of Christian endeavour; and we find ourselves enveloped in the gloom of Calvary. We may even know what it is to prepare for a Holy Week spent at the foot of the Cross in luxury of sorrow, and then for a spiritual deadness or an interference of worldly concerns to banish us from Calvary altogether.

At such times, remember, among the women of the Passion, the Blessed Virgin. *We* can see God's purpose more plainly than she could, working out in her life, and in the life of her Son. That same purpose is working out in our life, and that of our loved ones. Only let us give up our wills, and help them to give up theirs, more fully to God's will and His glory, and in a fresh dedication not only of what we strive after but of what God sends, let us echo the cry, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me even as Thou wilt."

2. The other lesson to learn from her, who was in every sense the first woman of the Passion, is briefly this. Does she not help us to understand why life is not all

bright, why it has also its griefs and sufferings?

Sorrow in others perhaps we can endure. We point to the Cross and rightly say it has its explanation there. But when we ourselves are tortured with anxiety or wrung with anguish, it is so different. What have we done, we cry, to deserve this new sorrow, this cruel bereavement, this disappointment of our hopes, this spiritual failure? It is all very well to point us to the sufferings of Christ; but His were different, they were undertaken for others, that He might bear the sins of the world. They do not explain ours, which almost make us feel that God has forgotten, or is unkind, or unfair.

Then look at the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the Cross. For any mother to see her son brutally done to death is the very refinement of suffering. But I think any mother who has suffered thus would admit that the pure and holy Mother of God suffered more. Was it for her *sin?* For what she had *done?* Impossible. Was this "blessed among women" the victim of God's forgetfulness, or unkindness, or unfairness? God forbid! No! It was

even thus that she was brought nearest to Him Who was made perfect through suffering. If that was true even of His own Mother, why should it not be true of *us?* Look on her as we see her in the midst of the Passion, and learn not only to give up your will and your way to God's, but also to accept the sadder part of your life as the most blessed means of union with your Lord, as the sure way to win salvation through the Cross.

II.

ADDRESS FOR THE TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Mary of Bethany.

II.

ADDRESS FOR THE TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Mary of Bethany.

As we look at the women of the Passion, the Blessed Virgin naturally holds the first place. But Mary of Bethany is in every way worthy of the second. And indeed, in the lesson she has for us, our thought advances a step For in the Lord's Mother we see *passive* goodness, resignation to the will of God, and fullest union with Christ as made perfect through suffering. But in Mary of Bethany we see *active* goodness, manifesting itself not only in a friendship which made Him a welcome guest in her home during the final week of trial, but in that precious gift of sacrifice which made Him feel that her "good work" had been an anointing to His burial.

Here again, I see two lessons for ourselves, one suggested by the friendship, the other by the gift.

1. We may think of the Saviour as retiring each night of Holy Week, going out of the city, with its heated opposition, its cruel misunderstanding (which was at its worst on the Tuesday, the Day of Rebuke), seeking the quiet village of Bethany, just over the Mount of Olives, and there being received by loving hands into a *home*, as one of the circle of the family.

Oh do not let us forget that He comes among us still; and as the ungodly reject Him, and drive Him from them, and crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame, He yearns for us to receive Him, not only into the loving quiet of our own individual heart, but together, openly and publicly, into our *home*, stretching out loving hands side by side, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

The chief figures in that home at Bethany are a brother and two sisters. First there is Lazarus, the friend for whose death "Jesus wept," the friend whom by

the supreme miracle of power He called back from death. Thenceforth he owed Him his very life. And yet, can we say less of *our* life? Then there is Martha, the sister so desirous to do honour to the great Friend, and yet who is once shown to us as a little too much cumbered in her serving. And finally there is Mary, who chose the good part and sat at Jesus' feet, who in her hour of bereavement went out to meet Him and to pour out her heart, and cry, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," and who in Holy Week takes the chief part in welcoming and honouring a Guest so loved, a Friend so precious.

Notice all through, that friendship, close knit in brighter moments, made all the difference in the time of gloom. First in their own hour of darkness and then in His, friendship triumphed, love stood the test, and brought balm to sorrow. That is what our friendships are for. May we make such friends in hours of ease, that there may be a mutual ministry of comfort in the hours of need! And may all be sanctified by the share that is given to the Friend of friends Himself.

The friendship between Jesus and Mary of Bethany sounds perfectly natural to ourselves, pure and holy, close and intimate. But do not forget that such a relation was a new revelation to the ancient world, quite unknown before. For woman was not the friend of man, she was his tool, his plaything, his chattel. Let me illustrate what I mean from the question put in all seriousness by Socrates himself in a Socratic dialogue concerning home-life: "To whom does a man entrust more than to his wife? With whom does he converse *less*?" Women little realise what they owe to Christ. "He found women slaves," writes one, "He left them queens." And let their sisters of to-day be sure of this: that if they think to win a further queenship by (for example) pressing upon the nation a charter of women's liberties, their expectation is but vain if they find in it no place for *Christ*. It is not by claiming to be treated as a paid housekeeper that the wife will make the husband truer to his promise, when he says, "With my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." As once at Bethany, so in England still,

it is by admitting Jesus into our homes that home-life will be sanctified and truly prosper.

Oh let us treasure all the ties of that home-life, and never let them slacken. For more than fifty years some have flouted Christ's law of the indissoluble marriage tie, and allowed divorce and re-marriage. It has been for the most part the more than doubtful privilege of the rich. Without divorce there would have been fewer scandals in high life. And now men propose to cheapen it and grant it to the poor. And if there are some who urge that judicial separations are immoral, we must remember that they leave a place for repentance, and are therefore in accord with the Christian faith, whereas divorce shuts the door upon any such possibility. Thank God, the evidence of those who know, such as the chief-constables of our great towns, has shown that such separations often lead to reconciliation and union again as man and wife. The sanctity of home-life! It is the secret of our national and our spiritual life alike. And what of those within that magic circle who do not respond to it, who

do not welcome Jesus as their Friend? Alas, how many a family must confess to some such member, not necessarily an open obstacle, but still a secret sorrow, a careless husband, or brother, or child! There may have been *others* in that home at Bethany. Nay, we know of one such, for S. Mark and S. Matthew, who do not give the name of Mary, tell us that the feast where she anointed Him was at "the house of Simon the leper." Who was he? What part did he play? We do not know, but we may be sure of this, that in that and every household where Christ's presence is felt and known, there is a quiet unconscious influence for good which is the best influence in the world, and which must never be given up. And though we see no immediate result, in God's mercy it will show some day. I once was instrumental in bringing a man to repentance late in life, by what he told me had been his mother's favourite psalm.

2. And now let us turn to Mary's gift, and to thoughts suggested by the feast at Bethany in Holy Week. I need not describe it to you: Mary once more at Jesus' feet (this time pouring out that precious

ointment to anoint them): the indignation which was felt that money had thus been wasted instead of given to the poor, and S. John's significant addition that he who complained was Judas, the traitor who bare the bag. And then we see the Lord saving His friend from her momentary confusion and perplexity, thanking her publicly, finding for her work a place in His own atoning sacrifice, as an anointing for His burying.

May it be ours, and especially in such times as Holy Week, to anoint the feet of Jesus, to pour out a devotion that means a real sacrifice, a worship that is prompted by *love.*

We must be careful even in this that we do not sacrifice others as well as ourselves. In that earlier feast, when Martha complained that Mary had left her alone to serve, it was right of Mary to be at Jesus' feet only because her sister was *over*-cumbered in the serving, and wasting precious moments therein. It is not right at this or any time to hasten to church, to sit at Jesus' feet ourselves, if we are leaving our family or our household to serve alone; our sacrifice must not

involve *them*. We must see both that they be not cumbered overmuch with that which may prevent devotion, and that they share with us our devotions of the Passion, our worship of Easter Morning.

And what of Judas, and his complaint? "It might have been given to the poor." It is a favourite argument against such things as the costly mosaics at S. Paul's, or anything else poured out lavishly to the Master's glory. Who is Judas now? If we ask such a question, we must be careful against identifying ourselves with one or other in the Passion. We must not say, I am like Peter, or I am like Mary. ' For in each of us there is a trace of more than one such character. If one voice within us cries for the sacrifice of Mary, there is another voice within which brings the objection of Judas. "Wherefore this waste?" It is a cry which has more fatal effect on our devotion than on any other part of our lives. "Why was it not given to the poor?" We can always find a good reason for doing something else. I confess it is so in my own life. A quarter of an hour to spare! shall I spend it in devotion? says one voice. And the

other answers, Why not spend it on thinking of a sermon, or in a parish visit, and benefit someone else as well? And I am sure it is the same with *you*. And so our devotion gets crowded out. What a loss, both to ourselves and to others. S. John describes the result of Mary's gift by adding, "And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." What a beautiful and suggestive phrase! It gives us the ideal that this house of God should thus be filled with the sweet savour of our sacrifice of love, and that all who enter our own house too should be conscious of its spiritual sweetness. And the real preciousness of the gift lies in its being made to *Jesus*. He wants our devotion still, it is of use to Him, it has its part in His work. Oh, may those who are the women of the Passion to-day, see to it, for their own sakes and for His, that such devotion is not wanting now.

III.

ADDRESS FOR THE WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The Daughters of Jerusalem

III.

ADDRESS FOR THE WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

The Daughters of Jerusalem.

WE think very lovingly and very thankfully of the little band of ministering women who were so faithful to the Saviour during His Passion. We have thought of the Blessed Virgin, with her beautiful resignation, and her example of suffering as the "sorrowful Mother." We have considered Mary of Bethany with her loving friendship and her lavish gift of devotion. And there was a group of other women who ministered still even in His death and burial. They have followed Him from Galilee on this last journey to Jerusalem, and form a little company, with Mary Magdalene at their head, who are fully worthy of our

thought among the women of the Passion. But we see them plainest in the closing scenes of that sad week, and at the dawning of that great "first day of the week" which followed, and so there are others who must come first. The evangelist who tells us most about these ministering women of Galilee is S. Luke. And it is he who (in that Gospel which has fittingly been called "the Gospel of Womanhood") tells of another band of women—those of the Holy City itself—who are attracted to the Saviour by His very sorrows. He relates an incident of Good Friday morning on which we do not often dwell, how that, when the sad start was made for Calvary, there "followed Him a great company of people, and of *women*, which also bewailed and lamented Him" (S. Luke xxiii. 27).

It is about these "daughters of Jerusalem" that I ask you to meditate to-day. Again they will bring to us two lines of thought. One of them is suggested by the Saviour's answer when He stayed on that cruel walk and spoke to them in warning; but before that let us learn something from these women themselves

and the sympathy which was evoked in their hearts.

1. There was *something* in the first proclamation of the gospel which touched them. It was—the sorrows of Jesus. It was this that attracted even those upon whom His earlier words and miracles had had no effect. And now they find themselves following, they scarcely know why, for they have often seen a criminal led out to death through the streets before. They do so in no mere idle curiosity, like those who peer into the carriages of a funeral procession. (Never allow yourselves to do that! And yet again and again I see *good* women doing it.) But these daughters of Jerusalem appear in the midst of the mourning peasant women from Galilee, and they find the tears coursing down their own cheeks likewise. God gave them the chance of being attracted to the Saviour, and they took it. Is it not wonderful that God gives *us* the same chance? He need not have kept the Cross as the symbol and centre of our faith. But He has. What would our religion be without the Cross? What would life be without the call of

sorrow? The answer to both questions is the same. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Thank God for the drawing of the Cross! May we be attracted to it afresh this week! What a blank there would be in the year if there were no Holy Week. If I advance at all year by year, it is this week that gives the upward step. And when I note with thankfulness the increasing observance of Holy Week among us, I know it is the same with many another.

Oh joy, that something should melt our hard hearts, that we can really feel the glow of love! Moments of real devotion, such as may be ours at this season, ought to carry us faithfully through many earthly distractions that follow, and lead us cheerfully through many a desert of spiritual dryness that is in store.

2. But we must also look on the Saviour's answer, and we shall find that even in the melting of our hearts there is a word of warning needed.

We can scarcely call His words a rebuke. He does not check their tears, He only suggests that they should turn them into another channel. The atoning

death of the King of Kings was not a matter for mere sympathy. To be simply sorry for God the Son was an insult they little intended. He was no mere human sufferer exciting their pity. And so He cries, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me."

But these women of the Passion are worth His thought. He stays the procession, and turns, and in sad affection addresses them. For He looks on in thought, beyond the horrors of the next few hours, to the desolation of the guilty nation. "But weep for yourselves, and for your children, for behold, the days are coming"—and then He tells of sorrows to come in the next generation, which shall make them pray to the mountains, "Fall on us." For if the innocent Saviour suffered thus, what of the suffering of the guilty who made Him suffer? This seems to be the meaning of His mysterious final words, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep for yourselves." I almost think we need the warning, too. Let us remember now and

on Good Friday, that our tears must not flow for *Him.* We shall not be storing up for ourselves a special merit in our act of devotion during the hours He hung upon the Cross. Mere sentiment He does not want from us. It is easy for some to get almost hysterical, they do not quite know why. It is right our tears should flow, but we must be careful as to why they flow. Do we seem to have escaped from the dry atmosphere of the dull penitential wilderness of Lent, and to be bathing in the sorrow and the love which flow mingling down from the wounds of Jesus? Remember that it is still Lent. We have not yet ceased our daily Ash Wednesday Collect, "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts."

The Master bids us draw near to the foot of His Cross, not in the spirit of sympathy, but of penitence. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling." It is the tears of the penitent that He loves best to see. "A broken and a contrite heart"—*that* is the heart to bring Him now. Throw down the burden of your sins before Him upon Calvary, bury them with Him in His grave, and

that is the way in which, in a joyful Resurrection, the tears of Holy Week will give way to the smiles, the spiritual delight and happiness of Easter.

"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but . . . for your *children*." Yesterday's subject suggested that we must think of others besides ourselves in our *devotion*. The Saviour's words to-day suggest that we must not limit our *penitence* to personal sorrow, we must not keep our tears only for ourselves.

"Weep for your children!" Some mothers do, and wives and sisters likewise. Many is the silent tear shed in secret for some loved one in their heedlessness or their sin. There are times when the tear should be no longer secret. Would it not be better if they manifested more the anxiety they feel? To openly show their continual sorrow might touch a heart which was impervious to all else. I do not mean scolding or lecturing, but the sorrow of tender love, the outward manifesting of a wound that burns within. I could think of no *human* means of drawing me to the foot of the Cross more potent than the knowledge that I stood

between some saintly soul and its joy in God.

"Weep for your children." But there are some who do not. What is the use, they cry, of expecting perfection? You must take them as they are. It is no good putting before them a standard higher than they are likely to reach. You cannot be lecturing them for ever. And so we quietly acquiesce in a lower level of spiritual life in others than we aspire to ourselves. We may still go on weeping on our own account, but no longer for them. What is the good? God forgive us, for in our blindness we thus condone their sin. A son's or a daughter's fall is seldom wholly apart from their mother, and it is worst of all when *after* the fall she acquiesces in the lower level they have reached.

Nor are such tears only meant for those who have received the blessed responsibility of motherhood.

All around us the growing generation demands the tears of every follower of Christ. Men are growing more careless and indifferent, more neglectful of their God. They are less ready to shoulder

the Cross, and more bent on a life of their own pleasure. I have heard the proposal in connection with a London parish that the faithful should take their turn in a constant and unbroken chain of intercession day in day out for God's mercy on the growing carelessness and unbelief of the people of London.

Oh women of the Passion, let not the stream of your tears run dry, if it be only to keep us men from sin! Weep for us, pray for us, and for your erring sisters too! Slacken not your tears and intercessions! And remember all through that you must be weeping for yourselves as well, with no consciousness of all necessary devotions fulfilled, and of superiority to the rest, but in the spirit of abiding penitence.

So will your tears become tears of joy; so will you fulfil S. Paul's precept and be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." So, as you walk with your Saviour on the road of the Cross, along which He bids us all to follow, will you already have the knowledge of union and the hope of blessing. So will the tears of Good Friday be already mingled with the smiles of Easter.

IV.

ADDRESS FOR THE THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK

Pilate's Wife

IV.

ADDRESS FOR THE THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Pilate's Wife.

THE daughters of Jerusalem and their tears have given us a lesson both of example and of warning. And now we pass to another woman, who perhaps never came into personal contact at all with our Blessed Lord. But, nevertheless, she deserves a place among the women of the Passion, for hers was the one voice raised in His defence when the crisis had come and His mock trials were proceeding. Of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa we do not yet hear a word, but Pilate's wife warns her husband to let the Just One alone. And this makes her worthy of mention among women holier than herself. The old Coptic Church of Egypt even thinks her worthy of a place in the

Church's calendar, where she is found under the name of Claudia Procla.

Who was she? We do not know, except that she was some Roman lady who had come with her husband into the province. Had she been attracted to Judaism, the religion of this part of the empire? This was the case with many Roman ladies, and she may have heard of Christ by this means. Or was there some good woman in the Procurator's household, like the little Hebrew maid of Naaman's wife long ago (a post which may be of more influence than we expect), who told her mistress of Jesus? Certainly in Herod's household there had been one such. For you will remember that among the ministering women in Galilee there comes "Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward." At all events she hears of His entry into the city on Palm Sunday. Perhaps her own procession passed His as she went through the streets with her retinue. And she has heard of His wondrous words and deeds since then.

And now the slumbers of Thursday night are suddenly aroused by a mob outside the Procurator's house. Though

it is not yet time to rise, an urgent message has come from the high priest. Jesus has been captured during the night, and a Jewish trial is proceeding. They beg Pilate to come to the judgment hall, and get the sentence passed before the multitude who favour the prisoner can know.

The husband goes; the wife is left, full of alarm, spiritual alarm. She falls into a troubled sleep, and her dreams only intensify her waking fears. She starts up, and pens a hasty note, and then despatches it to where the court is sitting. "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him" (S. Matt. xxvii. 19).

The influence is exerted, but it fails. Weak and fearful, Pilate yet persists. He might have been saved from that name of execration in the eyes of heaven and earth. She almost succeeds, as we see from the reluctance which thenceforth possesses him; but something mars that influence. And so the ages echo, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Where shall we find our two thoughts,

that we may learn our Holy Week lesson from all this? First, I think, in that spiritual alertness, that spiritual alarm, which made her try and exert her influence. And then in the influence itself, its extent, its failure.

1. So far, in speaking of the women of the Passion, I have avoided studying other people's thoughts. But with regard to this need of spiritual alertness, a friend has better expressed just what I want to say.[1] "Pilate's wife," he writes, "pleaded for Christ. This is, indeed, significant, but it is not surprising. The good God, Who gave to each of us our initial capacities, has brought it to pass that women are naturally more spiritual than men. Even in the early days of the race, when men were mere hunters and warriors, scarcely more civilised than the quarry they pursued, women were of gentler mould." I cannot quote you the whole passage, but he ends by asking women this question: "In nine cases out of ten the possibility of spiritual danger, of unfairness, of cruelty, and the plight of tribula-

[1] "The Judges of Jesus," by J. G. Stevenson, pp. 131, 132.

tion is more sure in its appeal to women than to men. Are you aware of your privileges in this respect? And if so, do you understand that from her to whom God has given much He is justified in expecting a great deal? See to it that your spiritual capacities do not deteriorate simply because you do not make real use of them. Pilate's wife had a talent for spiritual alertness. She knew when spiritual danger threatened herself or a loved one; and when that danger drew near, she herself awoke to it, and she warned the man she loved. You have profited by centuries of spiritual culture to which Pilate's wife was a stranger. Therefore is one justified in asking you whether by prayer, by meditation on the element of quality in life, by all that makes for a divine sensitiveness, you are keeping alive within you the faculty of spiritual alarm? The question is important, for many an age has proved that women are the true moral sentinels of society; and whatever they allow to pass into the camp is generally accepted by others as good. Further, it has never happened that a community has risen superior to the

moral level of its women; and it is rarely that a family is superior to the mother."

2. And so I pass to speak of our second thought, the influence itself, its extent, its failure. The plain lesson to us men is to yield more fully to women's influence towards higher things, but it is women themselves that I am addressing chiefly. And the very fact that in Holy Week it is the women (who have probably done as much work to-day as many of the other sex) who are readier than they to come and meditate in the house of God, shows the direction in which their influence may lie. Do not be afraid of that influence! Do not be afraid to believe that you possess it, and then, do not be afraid to exert it. How manifold are the ways that you may do it! We will not confine our thought to that most intimate of all human relationships which exists between husband and wife. And yet Pilate's wife suggests a word about that first. If she tried to exert an influence over her husband in after-life, how strong that influence must have been on him as a young man to whom she was betrothed. That period in the relation of man and

woman we are apt to look on with an indulgent smile, as a mere butterfly time of life. But how different it ought to be for a Christian woman! A girl in whom I was interested became engaged to a man who had not been confirmed. I begged her to suggest Confirmation to him. She did so, and when I married them, I rejoiced to know that he had made his first Communion with her the day before. And what of after-days, and the influence of wife over husband? I do not think we need feel that Pilate's wife's interfered with her husband's business. For she does not dictate to him as to how he is to try Jesus. She only voices his own conscience, which we can see from the rest of the narrative to have been already pleading within him. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man!" It is the wife acting as the better self; not bidding her husband weakly give way to her, and perhaps make himself the laughing-stock of other men, but urging him to be true to himself, and to God, and to the light within. Rather than speak to you of the new ideals of the so-called emancipation

of women, I am old-fashioned enough to point you back to that old ideal once given by S. Peter, and made yet more familiar by the homily of the marriage service: "That, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your conversation coupled with fear."

Of the many other spheres of woman's influence, I choose out one that applies to single as well as married, and you must forgive me if I make it a somewhat personal one. In our town and parish we are brought in contact, in our various ways, with many young men who come up to this University. We all have our responsibilities towards them, and our power of influence; and this is assuredly true of those who give up to them a part of their houses, and thus receive them into their own homes. They come straight from school, with minds and habits unformed, and all ready to be turned in the direction of either good or evil. How many temptations beset them in the freer life here, you and I know full well. What a chance for a good Christian woman, with a motherly instinct,

to exert her influence! I need not tell you what tact it needs, and what self-repression. It is a task only to be undertaken after earnest prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance. But I have before now heard with thankfulness of some young man saved from almost ruin by the kindly interposition of some such good and motherly woman. And, short of that, there is possible an untold influence for good, an uplifting of the old standard of his home, a checking of new acts which have not yet become habits, and at which you know his mother would be grieving. And in all this it matters not so much what you say, as what you *are*. He must feel that your standard of life throughout is higher than his. It is not your words but your goodness that will tell. And do not think that this is above you ; perhaps it is the very work for which God has put you where you are. And if you lack strength, come here and claim it. And you will indeed receive it, if you seek it in Jesus crucified, and through the means that He has left you.

One final word about the influence of Pilate's wife. It failed ; Pilate tossed her

message away, and went on with the trial of Jesus. Why? Was it all *his* fault? Was it simply because he was too hard, or too cruel, or too cowardly to heed? Or was his wife herself at all to blame? I wonder what she had used her influence for in time past. Was it for power, or pleasure, or ambition? If so, it was natural, it was right that that influence should die. Are any hoping to exert an influence for good later on? The time is now. Do not wait, it may be too late then. But a *persistent* influence for good is something that God blesses and increases, and uses to do His work and advance His kingdom, in this world of sin and sorrow.

And as I speak of sorrow, do not forget that it is against that also that we look to our women for help.

> "If I can stop one heart from breaking,
> I shall not live in vain;
> If I can ease one life the aching,
> Or cool one pain,
> Or help one fainting robin
> Into his nest again,
> I shall not live in vain."

Such an influence is not in vain, because it is for this that Jesus came; it was for this that Jesus died.

V.

ADDRESS FOR GOOD FRIDAY EVENING OR EASTER EVE

Mary Magdalene and her Companions after the Entombment

V.

ADDRESS FOR GOOD FRIDAY EVENING OR EASTER EVE

Mary Magdalene and her Companions after the Entombment.

On Good Friday (at least until all is over) our gaze is wholly fixed upon the central Figure of the Passion. But now His Spirit has fled to the unseen world, to do that mysterious work among the dead which S. Peter speaks of as preaching to the spirits in prison. His Body lies within the silent tomb, awaiting the new thrill of returning Easter life. And so we have time again to turn our thoughts to the women of the Passion. We have said but little as yet about that little band of ministering women who had come with their beloved Master from Galilee. It is with deep thankfulness that we find them

moment comes she takes no prominent part in the Gospel story. Healed by her Master, she simply follows Him among the rest, but she *ministers*, and in the quiet fulfilment of her duties day by day she is becoming prepared to face the crisis. The first time she becomes worthy of mention by any but S. Luke is when she is seen in her brave devotion as the most prominent of those at the foot of the Cross, and her sudden claim to leadership is still maintained at the tomb. Renan tried to explain away the Resurrection by declaring that it was a hysterical woman who first thought she saw the risen Christ, and, by the force of her overheated imagination, she made the others join in her hallucination. But I fail to see traces of either hysteria or excitement in Mary Magdalene. Rather was she one of the few who all through that terrible time "kept her head," as we should phrase it nowadays. If she marked the sepulchre carefully, and then returned, both to keep the Sabbath and to prepare the last offerings of reverent love, it showed a mind that could be devoted and at the same time methodical.

My sisters, I know that *you* would fain be women of a crisis too. When I go into the presence of the dying and of the dead, I know of nothing more beautiful than the sight of a good woman, still faithfully ministering. She may have taken no prominent place in the household previously, no one knew that she was endowed with any gift for nursing, nor can any understand whence she gets a self-control so unflinching, and a self-abnegation so complete. But she is the woman of a crisis, and it almost seems that it was for this that she has lived. Such women in their quiet strength are always those whose minds are stayed on God. A crisis like this will almost certainly come in *your* life too. You will have the chance of ministering in some supreme moment, and of helping all around you to face with hope and fortitude some cruel bitterness. Will you be strong enough to do it when the time comes? Prepare yourself for it as Mary Magdalene did. Come to your Master and be healed, seek His help in casting out from your heart the spirit of evil, of selfishness, and self-seeking; and then

quietly minister to Him and to those for whom He has died, in the little duties of daily life. Do not try to be prominent, or to find or make a crisis for yourself, and when one really comes, please God, you will not be found wanting.

There are one or two more among those ministering women whose names have reached us, Salome, the mother of S. James and S. John, Joanna, and Susanna. But there is only one name I would put before you to learn from now. "There was Mary Magdalene," we are told by S. Matthew (xxvii. 61) "and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre." And just before, in the list of the women at the foot of the Cross, comes "Mary the mother of James and Joses." The two next evangelists speak of "Mary the mother of James," at the tomb, while S. John calls her, "Mary the wife of Cleophas."

"The other Mary!" There is something almost pathetic about the title. I remember years ago, during a Quiet Day, the conductor (Canon Newbolt) setting her before us as one of the most beautiful characters in the whole of Scripture. For

she always takes the second place. She is never spoken of except in relation to someone else. She bears the same name as the Magdalene, but is of less importance, so she is simply "the other Mary." And when it was necessary elsewhere to explain who she was, no deed of her own was chosen to describe her; her husband's name is enough. She is "Mary the wife of Cleophas." And again, it was her sons who were well-known in the next generation of Christians, so she is "Mary the mother of James and Joses." We know not how much they owed to their mother's quiet influence, but we can picture her as well content to be known only through her dear ones, and (although in her brave devotion she was second to none of the women of the Passion) to be in no one's thoughts except in her relation to others.

It is a great thing to come forward into sudden prominence as the woman of a crisis. But there may be someone else already who is more fitted for it than you. For a woman to thus obliterate herself and fall back into the second place is not an easy thing. Have you learnt, with cheerful readiness, and without the least

diminution of your zeal and devotion, to play the part of "the other Mary"? How blest is any family which has such a member, content to be a nonentity, only thought of in relation to the rest, and yet perhaps with an unrecognised influence which oils the wheels of home life and makes it run smoothly from day to day!

In the records of the Resurrection the other Mary's name does not even find a place. But I am quite sure that her joy and reassurance and new nearness to the Master to Whom she had ministered was equal even to that of her namesake. Not least is her place and her lesson among the women of the Passion.

2. We have paused, while the women were preparing their spices and ointments to meditate upon some of them individually. Now let us return with them to the tomb, and learn the lesson of "the preparation" which as a whole they have to teach us. Their preparation was indeed a precious one, for it was for the Lord's Body. We, too, are preparing at this time for the Lord's Body in a different sense. Ours is no mere anointing of It as an act of love, but a receiving of It in the

Blessed Sacrament. We, too, come with the spices that we have prepared, even the meek spirit and the contrite heart, which, in the sight of God, are of great price. We offer ourselves, the whole of ourselves. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought at a price." That price gives us each a value in the eyes of Jesus; let us present that full value to Him now.

And what was the women's cry as they came to the sepulchre? What was their regret? How were they hindered from the Lord's Body? "And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great" (S. Mark xvi. 3, 4).

That stone has its counterpart in our case likewise, even the cold dead weight of *sin*. God only knows how great it is! "Who shall roll us away the stone?" How shall we rid ourselves of this burden of sin, this bar to access to our Lord? Not by our own strength, any more than those poor weak women, who were powerless to move the stone. But they went to the sepulchre all the same, prepared to sit down and quietly watch and wait. "And when they looked, they saw that the stone

was rolled away." So must we, too, who cannot move the weight ourselves, trustfully go to the sepulchre. Let us make confession of our sins, sit down and quietly meditate, pour out in confession the result of all our Lenten self-examination. And as we make part of our act of sorrow together now, we may feel a bond of sympathy between us from the very fact that there is the same bar in front of us all. "Who shall roll us away the stone?" The power of God, in the forgiveness of sins. So when Easter dawns shall we touch the Lord's Body indeed. There will be nothing between us and Him. And it will not be in the dead sepulchre, but in the glorious sunlight, that He will come to us, as the living risen Jesus, our everlasting joy.

VI.

ADDRESS FOR EASTER DAY

Mary Magdalene and her Companions after the Resurrection

VI.

ADDRESS FOR EASTER DAY.

Mary Magdalene and her Companions after the Resurrection.

HAVE you ever thought what Holy Week would be without an Easter to follow? Fancy what it would mean if, after all the special efforts and devotions of a penitential season, we went back to our daily lives with the women at the tomb as our last impression! It would make Christianity the gloomiest faith in the world, instead of a religion of joy and gladness. We have made our study of the women of the Passion. Do not forget that they became the women of the Resurrection too. Our study of them is not yet complete; it is impossible to end it without an Easter sequel.

If the conduct of women during the

Passion was such as to make their sisters of to-day thankful and proud of their sex, and burning to do something themselves to minister still to the Master in His need, what shall we say of them at the Resurrection? Men sometimes speak as if the faith had deteriorated and lost its hold to-day because *women* are first and readiest to come to the Saviour, and their number so greatly preponderates in our churches. They should remember that, while the first disciples were still sleeping in the city, or keeping a terrified vigil in fear of what might further befall, the holy women were hastening to their Lord. And as a result, it was to none of the stronger sex (whose status in those days was so immeasurably above the other) that there came the stupendous privilege of being the first to see and welcome the risen Saviour when He had triumphed over death. It was to *women* that the honour was given. At the Resurrection, God chose woman as His instrument, just as He had chosen her at the Incarnation. The simple village maiden had been the vehicle through which the Incarnate Word had come to men. Even so now it is the

women who are entrusted with the divine message: "Go, tell My brethren." In both cases the privilege is one to be claimed and shared by all the rest of the sex. From that time the position of woman began to be exalted, never to sink again. And the call comes to every woman still to walk worthily of such a blessing. But in both cases there is a special uplifting of chosen individuals. The Blessed Virgin became "blessed among women," and the holy women of Easter morning have a holiness that is their own. Never lose sight of the fact that these women of the Resurrection only became such because they were the women of the Passion first. They show us the way of the Cross as the only true way of light. The world staggers at the amount of sorrow and pain on God's earth, but that is because it has not yet learnt the lesson of those few tearful heart-broken women who went to mourn and minister at the tomb, and by so doing found the Risen Christ, and saw first in full radiance the Light of the World.

Our two thoughts seem to be suggested by the two different records given by S John and by the other evangelists.

1. We will turn first to the account given by S. John. Here we are not told of the rest of that little company; it is their foremost member who has the place of honour. The few verses which describe the appearance to Mary Magdalene are to me at least among the tenderest and most precious in the Bible.

Her cup of sorrow was already full, and yet a new and unexpected difficulty presents itself. They had been perplexed how they should get the stone removed, but now not only is it rolled away, but that precious Body has been taken away likewise. What anguish lies in her appeal to the seeming gardener, "Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him!" (xx. 15). And then the hindrance itself becomes the blessing. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary!" In many a trial there lurks the voice of Jesus still for those with ears to hear. And how personally He calls! Mary! Her own name! It is when we are lonely and in difficulty, it is in some moment of stress or crisis that the Risen Christ is most plainly beside us. How often we mistake Him! The revelation comes when we

can realise two things: our own personality, and *His;* when we can feel that we are infinitely precious in His sight, and He in ours. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary!" But there is one word more to make our Easter touch complete; we must answer, we must name Him back, we must make our glad recognition and acknowledgment. "She saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master!"

Never think it enough to be a member of the Church, even though that Society be divine. Never be content simply to learn from the experience of others in your religion, to think their thoughts, and use their words, to share their worship, in a word, to be one of the many. Jesus calls you to more, to personal touch with Himself. Forget sometimes that there is anyone in the universe but you and He. But remember that it is *Easter* touch. In your daily life, in your trials, in your Communions and all your worship, and at length in the one clear final call, hear with a thrill of joy His naming of your name, and make your answering cry through all with intensity of gladness, "Rabboni, Master!"

2. It is only S. John who records this

special and personal appearance to Mary Magdalene. The other evangelists, though most fully S. Matthew, tell of the more public manifestation of Himself which the risen Lord seems to have granted the rest of that little company of women immediately afterwards. To them it is an angel that first appears, and it is through him that the good news is given: "He is not here, He is risen." It is not always that the Master deals with us personally at once; He may choose a medium through which the glad tidings may come. And this is His method still. His angel is the Church, which gives His message to the world, and imparts to each newcomer who is ready to receive it the glorious faith which bears His name, and the proclamation of redemption and of hope. But the angel has a further message, or rather, he gives his own message to the women and charges them to pass it on. Those who receive the good news are given a work to fulfil among their fellows. "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead" (S. Matthew xxviii. 7).

And if the Easter message sounds

afresh in our hearts to-day, if the Church has filled us with a new realisation of a *living* faith, we too are forthwith given our message to deliver to the rest. If we have in any sense kept aright our Holy Week, it will have sent us back to our daily lives with a fresh realisation of our redemption in Christ Jesus, and a fresh desire to proclaim Him by our deeds and lives.

The women do not wait for more, the message is enough to speed them on their way rejoicing. Happy are we if, following the bidding of the Church, we have arisen at once and done as they who "departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word." Yes, happy indeed, for this was the means whereby a new revelation came to themselves. The verse that follows reveals the secret of the Christian life: "And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him" (S. Matthew xxviii. 9). Those of you who do parish work can testify with me that, even when our Master seems sadly absent from our worship, and the

Church's message seems only hearsay, it is in definite work for Him that He comes Himself. Sometimes He comes in the lesson we learn from the sick-bed at which we minister, sometimes it is in some hard or irksome work that we suddenly become conscious that He is with us. Oh, let every worker beware of ever settling down into a self-reliant and almost professional spirit which is too businesslike to notice the Master as He passes by! It is a danger for ministering women as well as for us clergy, and it *is* possible, not only to ignore the work the Church has laid upon us, but also to do it in such a way that we miss the personal manifestation of the risen Lord.

May it be, as we seek to do His work, that He meets us again and again, saying, All hail! Thanks be to God, that between the end of Holy Week and our return to fresh duties in our daily life, there comes an Easter Day. In that Sacrament in which we all have our share Jesus meets us indeed, saying, All hail. And in the glad services of the House of God, where we are brought into the very path in which He walks among men, we too may

come and take hold of His feet and worship Him.

But never forget that, even when the women of the Passion had become the women of the Resurrection, they were not allowed to stay and idly bask in the joy of their new devotion. This new thrill of joy was something they must needs take out with them to the rest. The Master Himself speeds them on with the same message with which they had started: "Go, tell My brethren."

Even so must we not be disappointed if the rapture of an Easter dawn soon fades into the light of common day. We have our glimpse, our assurance, our union face to face, our clasping of His feet, and then we speed forth to life and duty. We go with all the high resolves of Holy Week thus strengthened and consecrated. We go to take to the world the message that we shall best proclaim by showing it in our own lives, the message of the forgiveness of the penitent, the raising of humanity in Christ Jesus, and the hope of the promise given in His rising again, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

JARROLD & SONS, LTD.,
PRINTERS,
THE EMPIRE PRESS, NORWICH.

Duke University Libraries
D0073819 4W